A MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTION WHICH TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

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Our cover picture is of the class now taking Course N1, offered by the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University, the subject being the Education of the Blind. So far as we know, no equivalent academic course is offered anywhere else. It consists of lectures covering the history and development of the education of the young blind and the rehabilitation of the adult, together with much required and directed reading and some research. The latter part is made possible by the resources of the unique special reference library of the Perkins Institution, a collection of many years. Some of the students of the course have come from afar,—Hawaii, Porto Rico, Holland,—the present class of sixteen coming from eight states and from Canada, Cuba and Japan. Twelve of these are also pursuing a theoretical and practical course in the special methods of the school. Scholarships are being assembled for the purpose of enabling more and more promising people, either blind or seeing, to come to Massachusetts to be trained for this special line of teaching.

Practically all the 52 instructors of Perkins have had either general normal or collegiate training, but most of them have acquired their special preparation "on the job." However, 18 of them have now taken N1, four of whom will use their credits from N1 towards the Harvard degree of M. Ed.

The 48 residential schools for the blind in the United States still select their teachers from the general supply. No definitely special advance preparation has ever before been expected or required. Harvard University and the George Peabody College for Teachers at Nashville, which gives a summer course, and the Perkins Institution are pioneering to help place the education of the blind on a plane with other professional education; and doubtless they will achieve this end before long. A few states have begun to make provision for licensing the teachers of their special schools and for paying them higher salaries than general teaching of similar grade commands. Why not? The successful instructor of handicapped children must have unusual strength,—initiative, resourcefulness, thoroughness, understanding and wisdom; and obviously he needs also special preparation. He has a peculiar problem to solve, which is how most effectually to prepare his pupils for social and economic competency. Teaching them at school is both pleasant and satisfying. The classes are small and the children usually more serious students than those distracted by excessive "extra-curricular activities." The pay is increasingly good, and not a few people make this calling their lifework.

Requests from public school pupils pour in to Perkins for information to be worked up into essays on the education of the blind. This indicates a growing interest in the topic on the part of teachers. But all teachers who can should visit the institution. They will be welcome to inspect every department of it. Its school sessions, vacations, etc., correspond to those of other schools. Practically all the pupils are resident,—necessarily so because they come from all over New England. The few who live in Watertown go home nights; and most whose homes are in Greater Boston go to them week-ends. There are comparatively few blind children of school age, barely 400 in all New England,—while there are several times as many deaf children and, therefore, the more schools for them, as was indicated on page 60 of the November, 1926, number of this periodical. The

tangible appliances and special socializing facilities of a boarding school for children shut in by blindness are expensive. But Perkins Institution, which has been privately endowed, has them in abundance; in fact, in this feature no such school in all the world is superior. It does not fit its pupils for special workshops, but rather for employment alongside the seeing. They may be found successfully following such callings as these: hand assembling in factories and warerooms, ticketing, wrapping, inspecting, selling, office typewriting, making household articles, serving as mothers' helpers, poultry keeping, lecturing, writing, entertaining, investigating social conditions, home teaching among the adult blind, operating telephone exchanges, teaching school, teaching music, church organ playing, singing, playing for dances, composing music, piano tuning, practising massage, osteopathy, law and preaching.

While instructing the young blind is easy enough, it is difficult to fit them for the business competition of the world. The pity most people give them is not helpful—is destructive rather than constructive. If what many of our blind people do could be generally known and understood, it would foster respect rather than wonder, and their condition would be far less a tragedy than it is. Their particular cross is in their isolation and dependence, much of which would be mitigated by a better mutual understanding.

One way to bring about this understanding is to see the activities of blind pupils; for seeing is believing. School and college classes may visit Perkins Institution at almost any time. They will see there a museum of thousands of specimens for object teaching, which supply the place of pictures; a great library of quarto volumes in braille, with textbooks for the pupils and fiction in great variety to feed the reading hunger of the greater number of the grown-up people who live at home. The yearly circulation of books exceeds 17,000. Most of this is done by mail, Uncle Sam carrying them both ways free of postage. It is informing to learn how children who cannot see are taught direction and orientation, how to make and read maps, draw geometrical diagrams, etc.; how to play all sorts of table games; how to swim and dive; how to coast and skate, to play a modified game of football and to indulge with zest in competitive athletics,—all kinds of jumping, putting the shot, and sprinting. There is a national athletic association of schools for the blind, which holds yearly competitions for prizes. A few of the schools are situated near enough for actual meets. The life at such a family-plan school as that of Perkins is pretty wholesome and normal. But it is helped and improved by public attention. The proverb, "They can who think they can" applies very well to the blind at school. But after graduation the proverb should read "They can what the public thinks they can."

Come and see Perkins. It is at Watertown and housed in a group of Tudor Gothic buildings with a setting of trees and shrubs well worth a visit in themselves. It may be easily reached by trolley from Park Street, Boston, from Brighton, Newton, Waltham or Cambridge. On reaching Watertown steer for the great tower by the Charles River, but avoid the river road or boulevard, as the entrances are on Riverside Street and North Beacon Street.

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